

VZCZCXRO7383
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHRN
DE RUEHMR #0196 1831549
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O P 011549Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3748
INFO RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 4167

UNCLAS MASERU 000196

SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/S, DS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: EARLY TAXI STRIKE END POSSIBLE

REF: MASERU 194 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. On July 1, the leadership of the Maseru Region Transport Association (MRTA) held a press conference at the African Episcopal Church at which they announced their willingness to suspend their current strike, originally scheduled to last through July 3, pending the outcome of a meeting with the GOL scheduled to take place later in the afternoon. Despite harsh and insulting language directed at the GOL during the press event, voices of moderation came to the fore calling for an end to the protest action. While the strike continued to pose an obstacle on July 1 for many Basotho on their way to work, Maseru continued to move back towards normality with more retail stores and factories resuming their normal operating hours.

¶2. COMMENT: The MRTA action appears not to be having its desired effect - increasingly more Basotho are returning to work, and the GOL is augmenting, not cutting, the routes of its fleet of buses to ensure citizens' ability to work despite the will of the taxi association. In this light, it is not surprising that the MRTA may seek to end its strike, though such a decision has not been reached by close of business on July 1. However, even if the strike ends, the fundamental issues which led to the protest action remain unresolved. END COMMENT.

NOLAN